

Mobilizing Citizen Archivists: North Carolina Documents the Great War

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Abstract:

Upon entering the Great War in April 1917, the United States found itself ill-equipped to fight an overseas conflict and equally unprepared to systematically document it as a historical phenomenon.¹ In contrast to many European nations, the United States government lacked an official national archive; and instead relied heavily on federal agencies and individual branches of the military to collect, preserve, and store records.² At the state level, executive and legislative departments were responsible for maintaining their own material. However, various factors including administrative policies and resource allocation levels caused states' documentation strategies to vary widely.³ Nevertheless, the urge to document was strong. Reacting to the inadequate documentation of North Carolina's contributions to the American Revolution and the Civil War, state officials pledged to record the state's military service and home-front mobilization.

Within weeks of President Woodrow Wilson's declaration of war, North Carolina's Historical Commission expanded the scope of its activities from managing the state's official war records to actively collecting unofficial documents related to home-front mobilization.⁴ This Commission appealed directly to state agencies, civic and social organizations, businesses, academic institutions, and community groups to gather "every scrap of material" related to the Great War.⁵ After the Armistice in 1918, the North Carolina state legislature formalized this documentation effort by authorizing and funding the position of "Collector of War Records." With little money to hire the necessary professional staff, the state had to rely on a network of citizen volunteers to fulfill the position's goals and broaden the reach of the project. Using predetermined categories of selection, these civic-minded historians functioned as archivists at the county level.⁶ To ensure effective local collection, the commission sought citizen representatives for each of the state's one hundred counties. This study examines three key issues related to the documentation of the Great War in North Carolina: first, the underlying reasons the state committed to collecting war records; second, the scope and scale of the collecting project; and third, how the empowerment of citizen archivists to collect war-related material in their respective communities contributed to a shared historical narrative.

Keywords: Great War | World War I | North Carolina | Archives | War Records

Article:

Introduction

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The Impetus to Collect

As one of the original thirteen British colonies, North Carolina is prominently placed in the southeastern United States. Situated between the states of South Carolina and Virginia, some North Carolinians describe themselves as a "vale of humility between two mountains of conceit."⁷ The state's geographic location, with access to both farmland and seaports, made it economically and politically important during both the American Revolution and the American Civil War. While the citizens of North Carolina distinguished themselves in both wars, state officials and historians felt that their participation had not been adequately chronicled. This failure to document the state's previous wartime contributions may have prompted the North Carolina Historical Commission to take immediate responsibility for recording

what was initially termed “the war with Germany.”⁸ Although strongly committed to preserving the records of North Carolina’s mobilization in 1917, the commission was not prepared to undertake large-scale collection. It had to devise and implement a state-wide plan to gather and preserve war-related material, and such an initiative had no historic precedent in the state.

The scope of the plan was broad and inclusive. In its efforts to obtain formal and informal war records, the Historical Commission sought the cooperation of state and county agencies, local civic clubs and social organizations, members of the military, and civilians.⁹

Moreover, beyond collecting official records, commissioners deliberately aimed to document “the state of mind of the people toward the war, the effect of the war on social, educational, economic, agricultural, political and religious conditions, and the personal achievements, sacrifices, and services of individuals.”¹⁰ Succeeding in this enormous undertaking necessitated appealing to North Carolinians’ sense of state pride, honor, and patriotism. To this end, the Historical Commission appointed the organization’s secretary, Robert Digges Wimberly Connor, to initiate the ambitious collecting project. A historian and archivist, Connor had been appointed to the commission at its inception and worked tirelessly throughout his career to make it one of the most effective historic preservation agencies in the country. In 1934, Connor became the first Archivist of the United States. When he accepted the task of collecting state war records in 1917, however, he had no official budget or resources. Therefore, he had to solicit the help of North Carolinians throughout the state to accomplish the commission’s collection aims.

A Wartime Campaign

Just weeks after the United States declared war on Germany in 1917, Connor sent a letter to members of the State Literary and Historical Association, a non-government body of scholars and amateur historians, notifying them that the commission was spearheading an organized effort to collect and preserve materials related to statewide mobilization.¹¹ This letter established collecting priorities, which included official records, semi-official documents, public service information, educational activities, propaganda, photographs, economic information, clippings, and “fugitive” printed material collected from concerts, fairs, and events held to support the war effort. To obtain these wartime documents, Connor created an effective plan to enlist citizen historians throughout North Carolina to carry out his collecting directives. Although highly unusual for the time period, the historian and archivist Robert Connor created a plan to recruit both African American and Caucasian collectors from each of the state’s one hundred counties to contact local branches of agencies and organizations, county leaders, soldiers, and individuals to request their war records. The archival record does not reveal Connor’s thinking regarding this decision, yet he clearly saw the need to broaden the documentation effort to capture the complete North Carolina experience for current and future historians. Despite his attempt to account for the African American wartime contributions, his plan did not challenge the prevailing local practices and policies of segregation.

Lacking adequate funds and staff, Connor had to do considerable legwork himself. His outreach to the community for records yielded limited results. To expand and strengthen his collection goals, Connor solicited the help of Dr. Daniel Harvey Hill, the chair of the North Carolina Council of Defense. A professor, college president, and prominent proponent of Confederate and Reconstruction memorials, Hill was also a member of the Historical Commission. To advance the collection of the state’s war material, Hill established a historical committee called the “Historical Preservation” committee within the Council of Defense and

appointed Connor as its chair.¹² This appointment to the state's Council of Defense raised Connor's institutional and community standing. While the archival record is silent on this point, Connor's close association with Hill may point to a shared desire for North Carolinians to control the writing of their own history and the memorialization of their fallen citizens.

Meanwhile, other collecting initiatives began to emerge throughout the state. Colonel Frederick Augustus Olds, "Field Collector" for the North Carolina Hall of History in Raleigh, had initiated his own search for war records.¹³ Olds owned a large personal cache of historic material and was known as an avid collector. When the North Carolina State Legislature established the Hall of History in 1902, Olds donated his sizable collection and became its first director.¹⁴ During the war years, Olds traveled throughout North Carolina collecting war-related items that he then forwarded to the Historical Commission or kept for the Hall of History. While a noble endeavor, these competing collecting efforts occasionally caused confusion among state and local officials.

The Armistice and Postwar Collection Efforts

On November 11, 1918, fighting on the Western Front concluded with the signing of the Armistice. Although the United States was prepared for a protracted overseas campaign, after only eighteen-months Americans were beginning to break down their war machine. Far from weakening the urge to collect, however, the Armistice prompted the North Carolina Historical Commission to redouble its efforts to preserve the nation's contributions to the Great War.¹⁵

In 1919, the North Carolina General Assembly formalized the collection of the state's war records through the general provisions of Chapter 144, sections 3–6, of the Public Laws and Resolutions of the State of North Carolina.¹⁶ As the secretary of The Historical Commission, Robert Connor appointed Robert House as the full-time state Collector of War Records. A native of North Carolina and a graduate of both the University of North Carolina and Harvard University, House had served overseas in the American Expeditionary Forces. His status as a veteran thus gave him a personal stake in ensuring that the state's wartime efforts would be permanently recorded. He truly believed that "What North Carolina did in the World War is one of the most marvelous achievements in history. What the World War did in North Carolina is likewise a most thorough social revolution."¹⁷

On June 16, 1919, Robert House officially assumed his position with the commission. His charge was to "survey all probable sources of war records and materials; to assemble these in the archives of the Historical Commission; to classify and arrange them; and eventually to publish from them a complete history of North Carolina in the Great War."¹⁸ With the assistance of only one part-time stenographer, he began evaluating previous collecting efforts and planning the next steps for the state-wide preservation of war records.

The Shame of Apathy

As Robert Connor transferred the Historical Commission's collecting project to Robert House, he communicated his frustration regarding the apathy shown by the citizens of North Carolina. Documenting the state's participation during the war had not been an easy venture. In a Historical Commission memorandum titled *An Aftermath of Vainglory*, the author (believed to be House) recounted a North Carolinian's reaction to a request for his war-related material. Even

though he had served with distinction during the War, the man doubted the value of documenting his efforts or those of his state, commenting, “Why this aftermath of vainglory?” Whether this query reflected modesty, laziness, or the comfort of the “vale of humility,” it soon became apparent the man’s indifference was in no way exceptional. Connor had encountered similar apathy from the state’s citizenry when collecting material during the war years. Indeed, upon hearing this account, he deemed it “a fine illustration of that old, traditional, unintelligent indifference of North Carolinians to their history, which is the very thing that North Carolina, together with all other progressive, enlightened States, is trying to overcome.”¹⁹

This irreverence and lack of interest in the state’s history would haunt House’s future endeavors and he would continue to question why some citizens were reticent to send their war records to the Historical Commission. To combat this apathy, he employed a strategy of cajoling, pleading, and appealing to the local pride of various communities into relinquishing their material for future generations of North Carolinians. He reminded citizens that the state had taken a “second-rate place in recorded history”²⁰ in the American Revolution and the Civil War. Perhaps hoping to fuel the flames of regional patriotism and Lost Cause sentiments, he taunted his fellow southerners: “What side of the Civil War has the world at large read? The Northern side, of course, because it is the only side that has been adequately preserved in documents.”²¹

To further rally the state’s citizens, House compared North Carolina to other “progressive states” that were “putting money, time, energy, enthusiasm, and brains into preserving their war records.”²² He held up states such as Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, New York, and Kentucky as stellar examples of successful wartime preservation. House also pointed to the excellent collecting abilities of England and France, quoting historians Charles-Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos. who stated, “History ... is studied from documents. Documents are the traces which have been left by the thoughts and actions of men in former times. There is no substitute for documents. No documents, no history.”²³ Adopting this “modern view” of historical scholarship, House dedicated himself to obtaining the appropriate documents to tell North Carolina’s story, and to avoid the shame he still attached to the state’s failure to document its previous wartime endeavors.

An Environmental Scan

In one of his first tasks as Collector of War Records, House conducted an environmental scan to ascertain how war-related materials were being collected. He realized that all the combatant nations would now be assembling the records they needed to compose histories that reflected their national perspectives²⁴, and he understood that many states in the union would be doing the same. In fact, in 1919, House learned that governmental agencies in at least thirty-five states had taken steps to document their respective contributions to the services.²⁵ There had been early interest between states regarding what records merited preservation and how they would be collected. In July 1918, Franklin F. Holbrook, director of the Minnesota War Records Commission, wrote to the North Carolina Historical Commission asking if it had initiated efforts to systematically collect and preserve the state’s war records.²⁶ Specifically, Holbrook wanted to obtain information regarding the related state agency, commission, or committee spearheading the endeavor, the source of the group’s authority and financial support, and what it was collecting. He also mentioned the possibility of publications resulting from these state initiatives.²⁷

As part of the environmental scan, House began surveying official documents held by federal agencies in Washington DC that related to North Carolina's participation in the War. During this search, he found that other states had been assembling their own war histories. Key states participating in this documenting effort had planned a meeting in Washington, DC to coordinate a survey of relevant federal government records, which House attended in September 1919. The meeting resulted in two significant achievements: it created a committee that systemized the transfer of service records to each state, and it formed the National Association of State War History Organizations.²⁸ The North Carolina Historical Commission became an official member of the Association, paying a \$200 membership fee to gain access to various resources.²⁹ Channeling the collective momentum generated by the conference, House challenged North Carolinians to keep up the pace. He declared in a pamphlet directed to citizens that "each State's civic energy can be measured by its efforts to preserve its records."³⁰

Returning to North Carolina, House began reviewing records from state agencies, and sifting through the extensive material that members of the Historical Commission, the Council of Defense, and the Hall of History had gathered. He also refined the scope of his collecting strategy. In a summary report to the Historical Commission, he described the chaotic state of this previous uncoordinated documentation effort,³¹ concluding that many of the records collected during the war years were woefully incomplete. While many citizen archivists showed initial enthusiasm for contacting organizations and individuals in their respective counties, they had done little to secure actual documents. Other volunteers found that critical war-related material had been destroyed immediately after the Armistice and this sapped the project of momentum.

Robert House had no choice but to try to resuscitate and broaden the commission's outreach efforts, and to clarify the original vision and message of the collecting project. To accomplish this, he reconnected with potential donors, appealing to their patriotism and highlighting the importance of recording state's wartime contributions for future generations. In any way he could, House sought to educate North Carolinians about the importance of preserving records as a "monument" to their wartime participation.³² He felt that the best way to chronicle the effort was to collect documents that illustrated "the spirit of the people and their contributions to the cause."³³ With an eye toward documenting the war as a historical event, he specifically pursued more personal, informal narratives, commenting, "I have the formal reports; I want color and North Carolina character."³⁴ In addition to soliciting the stories of soldiers, he sought information regarding every community's "quiet hero."³⁵

Do Your Part

In initiating this revitalized postwar effort, House implemented a well-thought-out, systematic approach to collection management. He prepared a roster of North Carolinians who were responsible for war work, scheduled meetings with them, and asked for their help. Specifically, House looked for individuals who had "organizing ability, patriotic vision, and the ability to achieve a following in [their] county," and he continued Connor's efforts to contact both African American and Caucasian women and men from each county to head regional efforts to gather war records. Acknowledging the official nature of their positions, he even offered them the use of Historical Commission stationery.³⁷

While Connor had encouraged citizens to donate wartime materials, House's efforts to train volunteers to identify certain types of documents for collection proved unique within North Carolina and among other American states. In training these volunteers, House instructed them

in basic archival methods. He directed them to refrain from organizing material that they collected, so he could use his own classification standards.³⁸ He also cautioned them to avoid pasting material in scrapbooks, encouraging them to instead “bundle it up loosely but securely and mail the whole business” to him.³⁹ To ensure that his citizen archivists understood which documents to preserve and deliver to the commission, House convened a meeting of county collectors in Raleigh on February 4, 1920, where he demonstrated collecting strategies.⁴⁰ He subsequently deemed this meeting a success, claiming it produced “definitive results.”⁴¹

To broaden his audience, House also employed brochures and pamphlets that clearly communicated his collecting vision. Historical Commission pamphlets detailing the project’s mission and identifying appropriate materials to collect (with titles like “Do Your Part,” “North Carolina in the World War,” and “What are You Doing?”) were sent to county representatives. These pamphlets encouraged citizen archivists to take every opportunity to connect with people in their respective communities, dispensing brochures at fairs, veteran reunions, and even movie theaters. To support the volunteers’ efforts and build excitement about the project, House “advertised” by distributing bulletins and appearing at commemorative events, such as local Armistice Day celebrations. He also asked editors of large state newspapers to publish his articles—mostly biographical sketches and military stories—regarding North Carolina’s participation in the war.⁴²

House made a special effort to reach out to the 83,000 North Carolinian officers and soldiers who served in the War, both at home and overseas. He urged them to tell their stories, send photographs, and donate personal letters to the commission. Understanding the particular value of wartime correspondence, House noted, “It is the tendency of human nature to forget the facts and figures of history and to remember feelings and ideals of great times. Nothing on earth can so preserve the feelings and ideals of North Carolina in the Great War as letters written during that time.”⁴³

Reaching Out to Underrepresented Populations

The scope and liberality of the Historical Commission’s expansive outreach plan was ahead of its time. During this era of Jim Crow, religious intolerance, and southern resistance to women’s suffrage, the commission’s decision to document underrepresented populations was extraordinary. Both Connor and House were committed to an inclusive approach to outreach that cut across gender, racial, and religious lines, actively seeking material from women, African Americans, and Jews.⁴⁴ This encompassing approach enabled them to develop a more detailed understanding of North Carolina’s mobilization, which would counter later efforts to selectively forget the contribution of the state’s often disenfranchised citizenry.⁴⁵

Women’s Networks and War Work

Women’s groups were particularly active in home-front mobilization and the Historical Commission deliberately solicited their participation in document preservation. Robert House asked volunteer county historians and archivists to reach out to community leaders and women’s clubs, believing that “they have more leisure to put on this work and as a rule, take more interest in the collection of material than men.”⁴⁶ These collecting efforts had the definite advantage of

being able to draw upon highly organized women's networks. Social and political connections provided efficient channels for collecting over 2000 items and countless narratives.⁴⁷ Women of North Carolina supported the documentation effort, as well as the publication of an official book chronicling women's war work. In a letter to House dated June 25, 1921, Mrs. Laura Holmes Reilley, Chair of the Woman's Club of North Carolina, specifically mentioned a promised publication of wartime accomplishments that had yet to take place, noting that while most states had done this, North Carolina had not.⁴⁸ Many women felt that they had made substantial contributions to the war effort, and they wanted their sacrifices officially acknowledged.

House was also directly in contact with members of the Women's Liberty Loan Committee, who had been very active and successful in raising funds during the war years. This organization provided House exactly what he wanted—a wealth of information and anecdotes about women's "heroic work and patriotic effort" on the home-front. This included moving narratives, such as a story about a milliner in one of the mountainous counties of western North Carolina who "closed her doors for days and canvassed the county alone, selling every bond that was sold by a woman in her county," and the story of an older woman from one of the northern counties, who bought a hundred-dollar bond with her life savings of dimes that she kept in a jug under the floorboards of her home.⁴⁹

As part of its overall state outreach, the Historical Commission also contacted women's colleges throughout North Carolina. During the initial wartime phase of the collecting process, Robert Connor corresponded with college presidents to ensure that campus mobilization was being chronicled.⁵⁰ Walter Clinton Jackson, a professor of history at the State Normal and Industrial College, eventually became one of the most widely recognized war collectors in the state. The history department at this public women's college issued its own pamphlet in 1918 titled, "Women and the War in North Carolina: Suggestions for the Collection of Historical Material." The pamphlet emphasized the importance of documenting women's mobilization efforts and directed the college's students and alumnae to collect material related to women's wartime service. The pamphlet also suggested that State Normal be the permanent repository for this material, claiming "when the historian of the future comes to tell the story of this great epoch, unlike the historian who tries to write of woman's part in the life of former days, he will not lack for ample and correct records."⁵¹ The pamphlet directed readers to send their material to the college at which point Jackson, as an official citizen volunteer for Guilford County, would forward it to the state capital in Raleigh.⁵²

The African American Response

When Robert House took the position of Collector of War Records, he continued the Historical Commission's directive to reach out to North Carolina's African American and Caucasian communities in search of citizens who might be interested in securing war records. Just weeks after beginning his official duties, he wrote to the County Superintendents of Public Instruction requesting assistance in finding African American representatives to gather information about how organizations and individuals in the African American community had been contributing to the war effort.⁵³ Responses were immediate and enthusiastic. Many African Americans were "on fire with the thought" of having their participation in the war preserved for historical posterity.⁵⁴ Responding by letter, attorney W. H. Quick commented that the tone of House's request had "the right ring to it" and pledged his support for the project.⁵⁵ Seeking to go a step further, the Grand Secretary of the African American Masonic Lodge wrote to House and

suggested that North Carolina align itself with other states and appoint a committee of African American members to work with the historical committee.⁵⁶ He pointed out that some states even included African American men on their official historical commissions. This type of collaboration would not occur in North Carolina.

In most cases, House responded to these letters personally. He also sent a bulletin to the “County History Collectors for the Colored Race,” thanking them for their offers of help and suggesting specific strategies for assembling county war records.⁵⁷ Believing that African Americans could better collect material in their own communities, he suggested that they organize history clubs or committees to gather wartime data. He recommended that they begin by assembling a record of all African American soldiers who died in the War, including photographs, correspondence, and a completed honor roll. Most importantly, he urged immediate action, emphasizing that “if such work is not done now, there is no possible chance of fairly representing the colored race in any history that may be written of the war in the future.”⁵⁸

Ultimately, House recruited African American citizen archivists from sixty-two North Carolina counties who began contacting local organizations, churches, civilians, and soldiers to collect material. Some volunteers made personal visits and others employed letter writing campaigns to reach as many people as possible. The Reverend E. A. Taylor of Scotland Neck, North Carolina, felt that the power of the press would be the best way to reach the African American population in his community. To this end, he published a compelling article in the African American newspaper, *The News Report of Scotland Neck, N. C.*, addressed to the “Colored People of Halifax County, North Carolina.” The article urged readers to donate their war records and documents and provided detailed information from Robert House regarding the scope of collection.⁵⁹

Despite the strong effort to reach out to African American communities throughout the state and the enthusiastic response from county representatives, the final tally of documents received was disappointing. Although numerous African Americans served in the military and took part in fundraising efforts, only twenty items were forwarded to the Historical Commission.⁶⁰ The realities of Jim Crow and the violence directed toward returning African American veterans likely made the community hesitant to respond to calls for this type of documentation.

Conclusion

As the postwar collecting phase began to wind down, Robert House shifted his efforts toward the “systematic arrangement, study, and publication” of war records.⁶¹ In some ways, the state-wide collecting initiative had proved disappointing. Although he had recruited sixty-five representatives from North Carolina’s one hundred counties, he often found citizen archivists’ participation “spasmodic and somewhat ineffective,” producing uneven results.⁶² Moreover, House’s administrative duties as sole program officer were overwhelming, eclipsing his efforts to venture out into the field and meet with collectors and donors.⁶³ His focus on bureaucratic obligations also prevented him from fulfilling his original charge of writing an illustrated history of North Carolina’s participation in the Great War.

In other ways, however, the project was a groundbreaking success. House felt that he made significant strides with war documentation, collecting over 100,000 items during his tenure as Collector of War Records.⁶⁴ In the 1918-1920 Biennial Report of the Secretary of the North Carolina Historical Commission published in 1921, House noted that some collections were

almost complete, such as the records from the State Council of Defense, the Food Administration, and the Governor's Office.⁶⁵ He believed that the Historical Commission could complete other collections—including service records, organization reports, and county and military histories—if given additional time. Finally, he realized that collecting “human interest documents,” such as letters, photographs, and narratives, would remain an ongoing process, and anticipated that the Historical Commission would continue to acquire these documents well into the future.⁶⁶

As House was finalizing his report to the Historical Commission in 1920, public sentiment regarding the justification for fighting an overseas war and the postwar settlement began to shift, and interest in remembering the conflict increasingly waned. Aware of this change in the American view of the war and inundated with thousands of items, House pivoted from community outreach to the more practical reality of processing the received collections. Although material continued to trickle into the Historical Commission, the grand collecting initiative to archive the Great War had ended.

Still, the initiative's ripple effects extended to future discussions regarding the importance of archiving the country's history and the role of citizens in documenting mobilization efforts. Indeed, in 1942, historians considering the best ways to chronicle the United States' participation in the Second World War looked back on House's model as one of the more effective state documentation initiatives.⁶⁷ Ultimately, however, the government did not embrace his model. The establishment of the United States National Archives in 1934 changed the way the nation documented the country's history. This central institution now defined archival practices and collecting strategies at both the national and state levels, and the professionally trained archivists it employed felt that they did not need the help of average citizens to chronicle the new war. Going forward, the National Archives would assume the leadership role in all future US military conflicts.

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Notes

Editor's Note: For more information on the war records collecting efforts before and after Robert House's time as North Carolina War Records Collector, see the historical notes for the finding aids of the North Carolina Council of Defense Records (WWI 1) and North Carolina County War Records (WWI 2) in the WWI Papers of the Military Collection at the State Archives of NC. They are available in the State Archives' online DOC catalog.

1. Franklin F. Holbrook, "The Collection of State War Service Records," *The American Archivist*, 25:1, (October 1919), 72-76; Newton D. Mereness, *American Historical Activities During the War* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1923); *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1917* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920); *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1918* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921); Waldo Leland, "Historians and Archivists in the First World War," *The American Archivist*, 5:1, (January 1942), 1-17.
2. Robert McIntosh, "The Great War, Archives, and Modern Memory," *Archivaria* 46 (Fall 1998), 1-31; Joan A. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science*, 2, (2002), 1-19; J. Franklin Jameson, "The Need for a National Archives Building," *Bulletin of the American Library Association*, VII (July 1914), 130-136.
3. Kimberly J. LaMay Licursi, *Remembering World War I in America*, (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 1-42; Waldo Leland, "The Archivist in Times of Emergency," *The American Archivist*, 4:1, (January 1941), 1-12; Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).
4. The Historical Commission was established by the state's General Assembly in 1903. Comprised of five members appointed by the governor for two-year terms, the commission was charged with collecting, publishing, and distributing documents important to the history of the state. It eventually grew to contain the State Archives of NC and the NC Museum of History by the 1940s. Now, it oversees all of the state-managed historical resources.
5. Robert House to Sir, June 25, 1919, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
6. In the United States, a county represents a political and administrative division of a state. Only one state in the United States is not divided into counties—the southern state of Louisiana, which is divided into parishes.
7. The "Vale of Humility between Two Mountains of Conceit" is a phrase describing North Carolina that originated from a speech given by Mary Oates Spratt Van Landingham. The phrase is found in Landingham's "A State's Scant Literature: The Native Literature of North Carolina: Influences of the Past; Prospects for the Future," in *Glowing Embers*, (Charlotte, NC: The Observer Printing House, 1922), 30.
8. *Seventh Biennial Report of the North Carolina Historical Commission*, December 1, 1916, to November 30, 1918, (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Company State Printers, 1919).

9. "Formal records" were designated as federal, state, and county reports and "informal records" constituted documents that reflected a more personal account of the war.
10. Seventh Biennial Report of the North Carolina Historical Commission, 1919.
11. R.D.W. Connor to Members of the State Literary and Historic Association, May 16, 1917. Julius Isaac Foust Records, UA 2.2, Box 19, Folder 3, Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives, Jackson Library, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, North Carolina, USA.
12. The members of the committee were George Gordon Battle (Edgecombe County, NC), Adelaide Fries (WinstonSalem, NC), J. G. deR. Hamilton (Chapel Hill, NC), Haywood Parker (Asheville, NC), Lida T. Rodman (Chapel Hill), and Paul W. Schenck (Greensboro, NC); Historical note of the finding aid for the North Carolina County War Records, WWI 2, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
13. Seventh Biennial Report of the North Carolina Historical Commission, 1919.
14. The Hall of History became the North Carolina History Museum in 1965, but remained part of what is now the North Carolina Office of Archives and History (including the State Archives of NC).
15. Jessica Bandel, North Carolina and the Great War, 1914-1918 (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017).
16. The North Carolina Historical Commission, Do Your Part, (Raleigh: North Carolina Historical Commission, 1919).
17. "The Preservation of North Carolina's World War Records" manuscript. Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
18. Robert House, "Preserving North Carolina's World War Records as a State Enterprise." Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
19. An Aftermath of Vainglory, Box 5, Folder 17, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. The North Carolina Historical Commission, Do Your Part, 1919.
23. Loosely translated from Charles-Victor Langlois et Charles Seignobos, Introduction aux etudes historiques (Paris: Armand Colin, 1897); Jay Winter, Sites of Memory, Sites of

Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

24. Robert House, "Preserving North Carolina's World War Records as a State Enterprise." Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
25. Franklin F. Holbrook, "The Collection of State War Service Records," 72.
26. Franklin F. Holbrook to R.D.W. Connor, July 22, 1918, Box 6, Folder 5, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
27. Ibid.
28. Robert House, "Preservation of North Carolina's World War Records," The North Carolina Booklet, Vol. XIX, No. 3, January 1920.
29. Eighth Report of the North Carolina Historical Commission, December 1, 1918 to November 30, 1920, (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Company State Printers, 1921).
30. The North Carolina Historical Commission, Do Your Part, 1919.
31. Eighth Report of the North Carolina Historical Commission, 1921.
32. The Preservation of North Carolina's World War Records" manuscript. Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
33. This philosophy was part of Connor's original vision of the project, and House continued to collect in this vein. R.D.W. Connor to Sir, July 22, 1918, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
34. Robert House to the County Chairman of the Woman's Liberty Loan Committee, October 30, 1919, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
35. Robert House, "Preserving North Carolina's World War Records as a State Enterprise." Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
36. Correspondence from Robert B. House, February 20, 1920, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
37. Robert House to Sir, September 16, 1919, Box 5, Folder 24, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.

38. Robert House to Sir, June 25, 1919, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
39. Bulletin to the County History Collectors for the Colored Race, September 8, 1919, Box 6, Folder 3, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
40. Raleigh Preservation Conference, Box 5, Folder 21, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
41. Eighth Report of the North Carolina Historical Commission, 1921.
42. Robert House to Managing Editor, August 27, 1920, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
43. Correspondence from Robert House, September 20, 1919, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
44. The Historical Commission developed a multi-pronged strategy to reach out to North Carolina's Jewish community. The immediate plan was to contact religious and community leaders. In addition, the Historical Commission sought the assistance of the New York-based Office of Jewish records. This organization provided the Historical Commission with the names, addresses, and military units of North Carolina Jewish enlistees.
45. Believing that its population was not statistically significant, the Historical Commission did not reach out to the state's Native American population. However, Native Americans in North Carolina did serve in the war. On July 11, 1917, 117 members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians registered for the draft. North Carolina Draft Records, Box 5, Folder 21, WW 3, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
46. Robert House to Sir, September 16, 1919, Box 6, Folder 3, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
47. Eighth Report of the North Carolina Historical Commission, 1921.
48. Laura Holmes Reilley to Robert House, June 25, 1921, Box 5, Folder 8, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC. Reilley, a native of Charlotte, was a prominent member of the General Federation of Women's Clubs and served as Chairwoman of the Woman's Committee of the North Carolina Council of Defense during the war years.
49. Robert House to the County Chairman of the Woman's Liberty Loan Committee, October 30, 1919, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.

50. R.D.W. Connor to Dr. J. I. Foust, July 9, 1917, Julius Isaac Foust Records, UA 2.2, Box 19, Folder 3, Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives, Jackson Library, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA.
51. "Women and the War in North Carolina: Suggestions for the Collection of Historical Material," Greensboro, North Carolina, 1918.
52. Robert House to Dr. Archibald Henderson, August 28, 1919, Box 5, Folder 8, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
53. Robert House to County Superintendents of Public Instruction, June 25, 1919, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
54. L. W. Hall to Robert House, September 22, 1919, Box 6, Folder 3, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC. Hall was a North Carolina pastor and House had actively sought to engage African American religious leaders.
55. W. H. Quick to Robert House, September 10, 1919, Box 6, Folder 3, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
56. C. S. Brown to Robert House, July 14, 1919, Box 6, Folder 3, Robert B. House Collection, WWI 82, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of NC.
57. Bulletin to the County History Collectors for the Colored Race, September 8, 1919.
58. Ibid.
59. E. A. Taylor, "The Making of a Great Book," The News Report of Scotland Neck, November 1919.
60. Specifically, two county collectors, W. H. Quick from Lee County and J. Dempsey Bullock from Wilson County, sent programs and data. Eighth Report of the North Carolina Historical Commission, 1921. The Historical Commission also received materials from George Peabody Carter, a records collector from Hyde County.
61. Ibid.
62. Robert House, "Preservation of North Carolina's World War Records," 1920.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Eighth Report of the North Carolina Historical Commission: December 1, 1918-November 30, 1920, 1921.

66. Ibid.

67. Lester Capon, "The Collection of World War I Materials in the States," *The American Historical Review*, 48:4, (July 1943), 733-745.